

BURNED OUT OSHKOSH.

Full Details of the Terrible Conflagration.

Estimated Loss Two Million Dollars.

THE FIGHT WITH WIND AND FLAMES

List of the Business Houses Destroyed.

EXPLOSIONS IN A GUN STORE

The Procession of Vehicles Filled with Salvage.

A QUICK DESPATCH OF DRY GOODS.

The Court House a Refuge for the Homeless.

A Faithful Servant Roasted Alive.

ORIGIN OF THE FIRE.

Graphic Sketches of the Scenes of Desolation.

THE LOSSES AND INSURANCES.

OSHKOSH, Wis., April 29, 1875.

The HERALD correspondent reached this city, after a night's journey, at seven o'clock in the morning. Rain had fallen heavily all night, and a dense smoke hung over the city, drifting lazily to the southwest under the influence of a light northeast wind. The ruins were smoldering, and in many places embers had been fanned into harmless flames.

THE ORIGIN OF THE CONFLAGRATION.

The origin of the fire is now thought to have been discovered. It appears that during the high west wind that prevailed yesterday morning sparks had been observed issuing from the smokestack of Spaulding & Peck's sawmill, situated at the northeast corner of Pine and Marion streets, on the north bank of the Upper Fox River. The lumber district was intersected, at Main and Division streets, with a double line of substantial brick buildings, occupied by business men, extending north to Algonia street. Half a dozen blocks east and west of this brick barrier and north of the lumber region, was a territory of frame buildings, with an occasional stone house. Plenty of room was the rule, with ample garden plots and trees for about one mile and a half east and west, a forty feet road the average width.

EXTENT OF THE DESTRUCTION.

North and south this territory had been burned over, and scarcely anything remains to tell of the homes and the active business houses that formerly stood there excepting an occasional bit of party wall and a strong structure or two, which, by the eccentricity characterizing large fires, have escaped destruction.

FIRST ALARMS.

When the sparks were first seen attention was called to the matter, the danger being fully appreciated by those living in the neighborhood; but nothing further appears to have been done, although it is freely asserted that the owners of the mill lying east whose property was endangered sent messages to Spaulding & Peck remonstrating against the recklessness of firing on such a day, and asking them to shut down at once.

About half-past one o'clock an alarm of fire was sounded by a locomotive on the St. Paul Railroad track, which runs through the heart of this lumber district, fire having been discovered issuing from the roof of Morgan Brothers' mill, which adjoins that of Spaulding & Peck on the east. The opinion is unanimous that this roof was fired by Spaulding & Peck's smokestack.

THE FIREMEN'S WORK.

The fire department—viz., Steamers Doe, Phoenix and Brooklyn and hand engine Niagara—appears to have been on the alert, expecting a conflagration. These machines were in the first instance taken direct to the mills and placed in position there, but before they had opened it became evident that a new disposition must be made of them, as the sparks were flying furiously east and covering the lumber piles and the roofs with white hot embers. The Doe got a stream of water from the river, and began to play upon the burning mill of Morgan Brothers. The Brooklyn, which was at first placed on the bank of the river, also in position to play on the mill, had to be withdrawn in a few minutes in consequence of the intense heat, which was so great as to crack the bark off the logs in the river 200 feet away. The Brooklyn was then taken to Division street, half a dozen blocks east, which was beginning to be threatened, and from this point played upon Sawdust avenue, as the lumber region is called, with such success that the fire was turned northward at Myers' Mill, on the corner of Sawdust avenue and Light street, half-way to Division street, a result that was aided by the success of Myers' workmen in flooding the building with water from the perforated iron pipes on the roof.

The Phoenix was placed in position at the corner of Pearl and Jackson streets, half a block north of the burning building.

The Niagara hand engine was engaged in general service.

THE FIRE GAINING THE MASTERY.

This was the situation of affairs at the time the fire at Morgan Brothers' mill became uncontrollable. In an incredibly short space of time the fire had communicated to the lumber yard of James & Steep, adjoining Morgan Brothers' sawmill, where the cinders were raining down in a tempest. While the water was still hissing upon the burning timbers the flames burst out unexpectedly in James & Steep's mill, east of the lumber yard, driving the attacking force back on a new line.

The Doe, which had played on the mill of Morgan Brothers, had in the meantime been compelled by

the heat and the destruction of the building to take up a fresh position on the corner of High and Division streets, on a comparatively open space, whence a stream could be thrown on the flames, that had now spread from the river bank, on the south, to High street, on the north.

HERE THE FIRE ADVANCED SO QUICKLY that the firemen were compelled to flee for their lives, as soon as they had commenced working, without being able to take out their engine, which remained there exposed to all the fury of the flames till the fire burned out, about one in the morning, when it was found not so badly injured as had been expected. One hundred and twenty-five dollars will effect all the repairs.

THE PHOENIX remained in position to the last, and was undoubtedly instrumental in checking the progress of the fire northward, although she could not stand the rush.

THE BROOKLYN removed to the corner of Division and Sawdust avenue, and there fought the flames, gallantly driving them inward and forcing back the line of fire a block and a half north from the river, at a point where it was most needed.

HOPE FOR A MOMENT.

It will be thus seen that the Phoenix in the north and the Brooklyn in the south had pressed back the elastic flames with hopeful success.

THE CHANCE LOST.

But a clear path into the splendid brick blocks of which Oshkosh was so proud. It was the work of but a few moments to reduce the entire mass to smoldering rubbish. Immense blocks went down like butter. Where stores had stood but five minutes before, nothing remained but heaps of rubbish.

A GENERAL DEVOTMENT BY THE FLAME.

Once beyond Division and Main streets, the fire spread north, south and east with the speed of a race horse. People had but time to look at the advancing enemy and fly. Hundreds had to abandon everything they possessed on earth except life. The entire district east of the brick blocks was one sheet of flame.

NO ATTEMPT TO SAVE THE PROPERTY.

No attempt was made to save it. The use of powder, which had been advocated and which had been spoken of in the despatches yesterday, was not resorted to, there being no powder at the disposal of the Chief of the Fire Department. As there is not a hook and ladder company in the city, houses could not be pulled down or destroyed. The fire had to be left to take its course.

SATIATED BUT SCARCELY SATISFIED.

When once it passed Division street it quietly exhausted itself, after ravaging all within its reach, between midnight and one o'clock this morning.

THE PEOPLE DISPERSING.

The crowds in streets that were not destroyed dispersed without confusion or demonstration. The tired firemen took a breathing spell. The grateful rain fell, and Oshkosh slept the sound sleep of a city that knows she has but little left to burn.

HELP FROM NEIGHBORS.

The neighboring cities of Fond du Lac, Ripon and Neenah sent assistance, in response to an appeal for help, in the shape of a steamer each, which arrived about four in the afternoon. The Fond du Lac steamer proceeded to the north bank of the river, east of the Court House, where she did good service in preserving that stately edifice, which still stands ready to overlook a fifth destruction of this much roasted city.

The steamer from Neenah went to the corner of Light and Church streets, where she aided in preventing the spread of the fire northward.

The machine from Ripon went to Washington street and also proved of excellent service.

The arrival of steamers with their gallant companies was greeted with cheers, and at their departure it was felt that the stay of the conflagration was largely due to their exertions.

NO EXPLOSION.

The statement that a powder magazine had exploded had no other foundation than the explosion of a quantity of blank cartridges in the store of Mr. Percy, on Main street, which he had been unable to remove.

LOSS OF LIFE.

The truth of the story of loss of human life is, unfortunately, too true. Charles Dunn, a spectator of the fire on Main street, who was examining the walls of Harding's Opera House on that thoroughfare after the fire had burned itself out, had imprudently approached close to the building, when the walls, still standing, fell, and buried him in the ruins. The corpse was dug out, much disfigured.

It is claimed by those present at the time that two others were buried under the debris; but there is no reason to suppose this is true, as a close examination has been made and there appears no possibility of any bodies being buried out of sight.

Large crowds of people are peering among the ruins at this time of writing trying to discover traces of the supposed dead.

ROASTED TO DEATH.

The bookkeeper of Morgan Brothers, Mr. Davis, perished in endeavoring to save the property of his employers. He went upon the roof and tried to turn on the water in the perforated pipes while the building was on fire. Before he could succeed he was surrounded by fire and literally roasted alive. His poor body was discovered this morning charred as black as coal.

ARE THERE OTHERS?

It is not known if any more are lost, but as no reports of missing persons have been left at the police office it is not supposed that there are any more dead.

THE WOUNDED.

Some five or six persons are reported injured by falling walls and burns, but the cases are not believed to be serious.

THE LOSS OF PROPERTY.

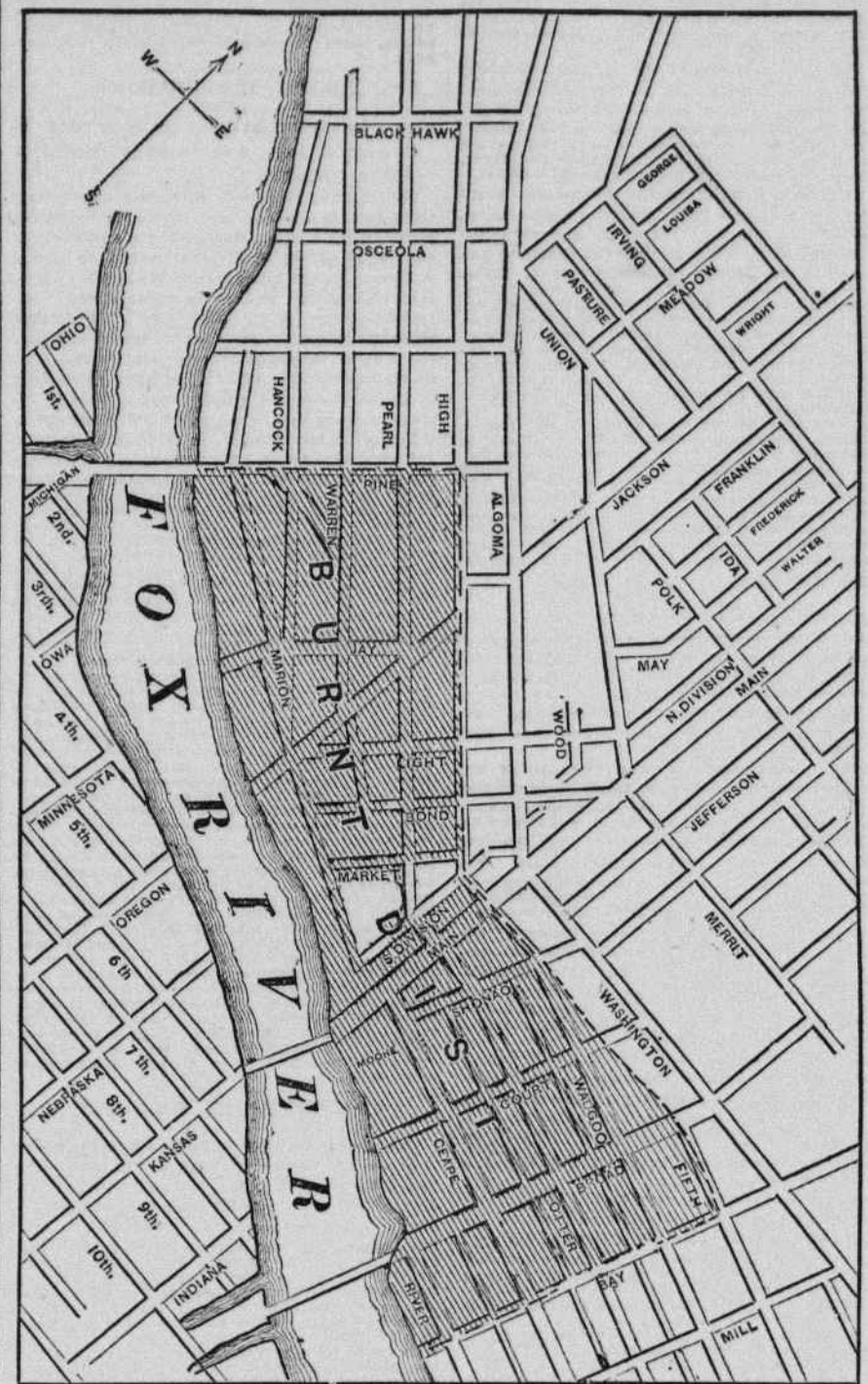
The loss is variously stated. It will probably not be less than \$1,500,000. It may reach \$2,000,000. The quantity of lumber piled in the yards was very large, and the early guesses made at the amount of loss appear to have left this item out of the count.

THE INSURANCES.

are estimated to amount to \$1,000,000, but there is no possibility of obtaining a statement owing to the wondrously disorganized condition of everything. Business men have no time to answer questions, being chiefly engaged in gathering their wives and children and other treasures spared by the fire together, and making a fresh start in life. Large quantities of valuable, perishable stock were in the open street this morning, exposed to the driving rain, and with such matters pressing it is not to be surprised at that information should be

THE BURNED TOWN.

Map of Oshkosh, Wis., Showing the Burned District.



difficult to obtain. There is scarcely a man or member of a family in Oshkosh who has not lost a homestead, or house full of furniture, or a stock of goods, or who has not a relative in that position. The loss in their busy season, when the harvest of the trader is ripened for the sickle is peculiarly disheartening and severe, especially coming as it does so close after the disastrous conflagration which last July swept over the entire northeastern part of Oshkosh. Luckily, very few Oshkosh men owe mortgages on their property. What they had was generally bought and paid for out of money earned and they are not disheartened, only dazed for a little while. Quite a number of prominent business men, who may be called wealthy in spite of their losses, have already determined to rebuild.

ENERGY AND HOPE.

It was a common thing to-day to find men of sagacity and enterprise poking about for the burned sites of their places of business, with architects and builders discussing the plans for new structures more solid and fireproof than those just passed away.

ANOTHER ACCOUNT.

OSHKOSH, Wis., April 29, 1875.

The following is from an Oshkosh extra, published here:

Wednesday, the 28th of April, must be marked as the day of our greatest loss by fire. The day was propitious for a conflagration; the hot suns of the previous days had dried the surface of the earth, and the great piles of lumber that glistened along the river banks were tempting to the fiery element. The wind began blowing very strong at sunrise and increased its fury until noon, when it blew a perfect gale. It was one of our old fire days; the air felt like it; the very atmosphere seemed to predict a conflagration. Everybody was heard warning upon every hand, and yet, with all the warning, and all the salutations, and all the indications of a day for fires, it was graciously and gently allowed to come at last. The warnings of past years were forgotten and the terrible winds swept unheeded by the cars of some whose duty it was, by law and by right, to shut down their mills on such a day as this. It was about one o'clock, and while the wind had reached its greatest fury, that the startling whistles screamed out the alarm of fire along the line of mills and steam factories.

THE PEAL OF THE WHISTLES.

It was a fearful day, and ten thousand souls started in wild excitement as they heard those first peals of the alarm whistles, and well they might. The deep volumes of smoke, thick and black, that rolled up from Morgan's Mill showed too plainly what danger might be expected. Hardly had the great crowd gathered from all directions when the spreading flames were already coiling and winding around the huge lumber piles that lay adjoining the mill. The wind was too strong and the volume of flame too sudden for effective operation on the part of anybody.

FLOATING CINDERS.

Great chunks of burning cinders came floating over into the lumber piles more adjacent to Main street, and they quickly caught. A fierce fight was waged among these piles, but the cinders became too numerous, and the flames too frequent to be baffled. The wind was blowing from the southwest. Onward came the rushing tide of flame, more furious by far than the descending floods of Mill River. The steamers seemed powerless to check such a furious advance. No sooner would they get set at work than the enemy would charge with bayonets of fire and drive them from their works. It soon became apparent that it must sweep everything before it, and the merchants of Main street began more seriously to consider the situation.

THE POST OFFICE BLOCK.

Desperate efforts were made to save the Post office block, and had the danger been from the

front it is more than likely it could have been saved, and with it that part of Main street north of High street. Unfortunately, the fire crossed High street to the west and came around to the rear, taking residences next door and the timber boxes to the rear of it, cutting off all hope of its being saved. Fortunately the mills or at least a large proportion of it, and it is thought all the letters, were saved. From here the fire rapidly worked into the rear of the block on Main street, between High and Algonia, consigning to the general doom the Beckwith House; next went the Central block, next to it. Here the fire was checked, to the northward, owing to vacant lots between this and the new blocks on the old burned district. Harding's Opera House, opposite, soon fell amid the general site. Curiously enough, the fire went to the northward, just far enough to the line of the burned district of July as though the fates decreed that none should go unscathed. Hale's brick structure marks the southern limit of the fire. On Main street, in the west side, it was hard work to check it here, but the building being fireproof, about fifty men, with buckets, succeeded in saving it. Undoubtedly the saving of this block meant the saving of the city offices, the Bowen House and all that portion east of Coepl street not burned.

DESTRUCTION OF COSTLY RESIDENCES.

The fire extended off Main street as far as Bowen street, taking everything in its path between Washington and Coepl streets, including the north side of Washington street, with all the beautiful and costly residences in that fashionable street; the Presbyterian church on Jefferson avenue, in rear of Harding Opera House, followed suit, and Dr. Barber's residence and that of Marshall Harris; Dr. Geo. and G. W. Roe, the banker, in their turn followed them. The fire raged with tremendous fury down Uter street, spreading from the Adams House to the German Methodist church, and swept through the residences of M. Griffin, Jucke Austin, John Clark, Chas. Overton, Mrs. Pride and Wm. Wall until it reached Court House street. It was by the most superhuman efforts of the attaches of the Court House that that building was saved. All the residences around it were swept like the chaff before the wind. The residences of Dr. J. H. Wrigg, J. E. Kennedy and J. M. Rodne, opposite, were burned, and William Humes, Henry Bally were Dickinson, next to the Court House, were also reduced to ashes. Henry Bailey was in Fond du Lac, and did not save an article of his household goods. When it was seen beyond a doubt that the Court House would be saved it became an asylum of refuge. All the residents of the yards were filled with rescued goods and the building with refugees fleeing from the fury of the flames and the shocking and blinding smoke and cinders.

THE DEATHS.

So far there are two deaths reported and several severe accidents, although in the terrible conflagration that prevails very little information can be got at in the direction. At the very outset of the fire one unfortunate man received injuries which caused his death in a few moments. His name is J. N. Davis and he was bookkeeper for Morgan Bros. Even when the office was enveloped in flames he rushed in to alter the books and was burned in a horrible manner. His clothes were literally burned off his body. His hair was singed off and his body so burned that great chunks of flesh dropped off as the unfortunate man was carried from the fire. He was taken to Dr. Russell's office, but lived but a short time. The other death was that of Charles Duns, an old man who was crushed to death by the falling of the walls of Harding's Opera House. He was squeezed into a jelly, his head being crushed into a shapeless mass of flesh and bones. His body was carried to Stringham's elevators where it was viewed by crowds of curious people.

THE LOSS TWO MILLIONS.

The loss is a matter difficult to conjecture at this time; it certainly is the heaviest loss that has ever befallen the city, and probably would equal all her other fires put together. It is variously estimated at from \$1,000,000 to \$2,000,000, but it will probably reach nearer the latter than the former figure. As to insurance it is impossible to make any report this morning.

THE FIRE DEPARTMENTS.

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THE SALVAGE OF THE FIRE.

Everything was in confusion; there was running to and fro in hot haste. Teams were eagerly sought for; empty vehicles were ravenously secured; the sacking of the beautiful stores and the piling of goods promiscuously in wagons, carts, or any available conveyance, commenced in true earnest. The clerks in R. L. Buggier's had the omnibus employed in removing their goods, and every available truck was engaged by the dry goods interests in that vicinity to remove them to a place of safety. But, in spite of their untiring efforts, the dry goods men suffered large losses. The smoke became blinding, and the strife along Main street was terrible. Unbridled horses, let loose from the lively stables, came dashing through crowded streets; runaway teams came tearing by, while the yelling and screaming from man to man became perfectly terrifying. It was a wild scene, which pen cannot picture. The fire had easily crossed the street and was devouring the Commercial and First National Bank buildings. The frequent booming of bursting gunpowder in Frank Percy's gun store added but another aspect to the carnage of fire and the wild fury that prevailed along the street; showcases came crashing to the pavement; milk and ribbons from the fancy stores floated along the sidewalks; articles of every description flew and tore in every direction, driven by the fierce wind that raged like a madman.

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front it is more than likely it could have been saved, and with it that part of Main street north of High street. Unfortunately, the fire crossed High street to the west and came around to the rear, taking residences next door and the timber boxes to the rear of it, cutting off all hope of its being saved. Fortunately the mills or at least a large proportion of it, and it is thought all the letters, were saved. From here the fire rapidly worked into the rear of the block on Main street, between High and Algonia, consigning to the general doom the Beckwith House; next went the Central block, next to it. Here the fire was checked, to the northward, owing to vacant lots between this and the new blocks on the old burned district. Harding's Opera House, opposite, soon fell amid the general site. Curiously enough, the fire went to the northward, just far enough to the line of the burned district of July as though the fates decreed that none should go unscathed. Hale's brick structure marks the southern limit of the fire. On Main street, in the west side, it was hard work to check it here, but the building being fireproof, about fifty men, with buckets, succeeded in saving it. Undoubtedly the saving of this block meant the saving of the city offices, the Bowen House and all that portion east of Coepl street not burned.

DESTRUCTION OF COSTLY RESIDENCES.

The fire extended off Main street as far as Bowen street, taking everything in its path between Washington and Coepl streets, including the north side of Washington street, with all the beautiful and costly residences in that fashionable street; the Presbyterian church on Jefferson avenue, in rear of Harding Opera House, followed suit, and Dr. Barber's residence and that of Marshall Harris; Dr. Geo. and G. W. Roe, the banker, in their turn followed them. The fire raged with tremendous fury down Uter street, spreading from the Adams House to the German Methodist church, and swept through the residences of M. Griffin, Jucke Austin, John Clark, Chas. Overton, Mrs. Pride and Wm. Wall until it reached Court House street. It was by the most superhuman efforts of the attaches of the Court House that that building was saved. All the residences around it were swept like the chaff before the wind. The residences of Dr. J. H. Wrigg, J. E. Kennedy and J. M. Rodne, opposite, were burned, and William Humes, Henry Bally were Dickinson, next to the Court House, were also reduced to ashes. Henry Bailey was in Fond du Lac, and did not save an article of his household goods. When it was seen beyond a doubt that the Court House would be saved it became an asylum of refuge. All the residents of the yards were filled with rescued goods and the building with refugees fleeing from the fury of the flames and the shocking and blinding smoke and cinders.

THE DEATHS.

So far there are two deaths reported and several severe accidents, although in the terrible conflagration that prevails very little information can be got at in the direction. At the very outset of the fire one unfortunate man received injuries which caused his death in a few moments. His name is J. N. Davis and he was bookkeeper for Morgan Bros. Even when the office was enveloped in flames he rushed in to alter the books and was burned in a horrible manner. His clothes were literally burned off his body. His hair was singed off and his body so burned that great chunks of flesh dropped off as the unfortunate man was carried from the fire. He was taken to Dr. Russell's office, but lived but a short time. The other death was that of Charles Duns, an old man who was crushed to death by the falling of the walls of Harding's Opera House. He was squeezed into a jelly, his head being crushed into a shapeless mass of flesh and bones. His body was carried to Stringham's elevators where it was viewed by crowds of curious people.

THE LOSS TWO MILLIONS.

The loss is a matter difficult to conjecture at this time; it certainly is the heaviest loss that has ever befallen the city, and probably would equal all her other fires put together. It is variously estimated at from \$1,000,000 to \$2,000,000, but it will probably reach nearer the latter than the former figure. As to insurance it is impossible to make any report this morning.

THE FIRE DEPARTMENTS.

Mayor Springham, seeing the probable result of the first outbreak, telegraphed to Fond du Lac, Ripon and Neenah for steamers. These dispatches were promptly responded to, and in a short space of time help was on the ground from other cities. In justice to the Fond du Lac Fire Department it should be said that the reason of its delay in arriving was a want of transportation. The engines were at the depot and two hundred men were in readiness, but there arose some misunderstandings. No locomotive was forthcoming for them. After waiting an hour and a half the Steboyan and Fond du Lac Road took off one of their locomotives and sent the boys along. They arrived in time, however, to do much effective service. When the flames finally swept over Main street the sight on that and adjoining streets beggars description. For a time those having stores and business places along Main street had great hopes that the fire would bear to the river and would be kept from crossing Division; when at length there was no doubt upon that point, there was no time to be lost.

THE SALVAGE OF THE FIRE.

Everything was in confusion; there was running to and fro in hot haste. Teams were eagerly sought for; empty vehicles were ravenously secured; the sacking of the beautiful stores and the piling of goods promiscuously in wagons, carts, or any available conveyance, commenced in true earnest. The clerks in R. L. Buggier's had the omnibus employed in removing their goods, and every available truck was engaged by the dry goods interests in that vicinity to remove them to a place of safety. But, in spite of their untiring efforts, the dry goods men suffered large losses. The smoke became blinding, and